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News Release

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White Bear Lake man sentenced for growing more than 100 marijuana plants

A 28-year-old White Bear Lake man was sentenced yesterday in federal court in connection with growing more than 100 marijuana plants in his home.

On Aug. 21 in St. Paul, United States District Court Judge Donovan Frank sentenced Soua Vang to 60 months in prison and four years supervised release on one count of manufacture of marijuana. Vang was charged March 6, and pleaded guilty on April 1.

According to his plea agreement, Vang also agreed that he manufactured approximately 900 viable marijuana plants.

According to a Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) affidavit, a White Bear Lake volunteer firefighter notified law enforcement on Jan. 26, 2008, regarding a home located on Michael Avenue, in White Bear Lake. The firefighter responded to a complaint of a citizen who believed the home might be on fire because the house's exterior had large amounts of condensation and there was a lack of snow on the roof. The firefighter concluded that the exterior of the home was hot to the touch, but observed no smoke or fire.

Vang was observed driving past the home and was later stopped by police. Officers told Vang they suspected his house may be on fire. Vang went inside the home and told officers that the house was warm because he had left the heat on too high, the affidavit stated.

A search warrant was executed on Feb. 11, and officers found a marijuana growing operation in the basement and in an unoccupied bedroom. The basement contained marijuana plants, along with stems and remnants of marijuana plants indicating a recent marijuana harvest. Officers found Vang, along with his small child, in the basement and arrested him.

"Indoor marijuana growing operations are devastating to our neighborhoods...not only do they supply the most widely abused drug to our youth but can also pose health and/or safety hazards to neighbors, future occupants of the residence, law enforcement officers, and

emergency service personnel,” said Dan Moren, assistant special agent in charge of the DEA’s Minneapolis District office.

This case was the result of an investigation by the DEA, the Ramsey County Sheriff’s Office and the police departments of Oakdale and White Bear Lake. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney David P. Steinkamp.